



STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

September 2008

To: Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members

FROM: Kaleen Cottingham, Director

SUBJECT: Director and Agency Management Report, September 2008

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### Recreation and Conservation Grant Evaluations

In July and August, grant applicants presented their projects for evaluation and review in the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Boating Infrastructure Grants, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, and Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account. I observed the evaluations in several of the categories, and think we have outstanding staff facilitators and volunteer evaluators. We have listed the names of our evaluators with each of the grant award memos.

### Technical Review Panel Volunteers

The RCO uses volunteers to provide a technical review of projects before the evaluations for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The review helps applicants to refine cost estimates, project scope, and description, and ensure project elements are eligible. Applicants also learn about the evaluation questions and additional information that they might need. I want to acknowledge and thank the volunteers who stepped forward and performed this task; they are listed at the end of this memo.

### Budget Preparation for the Next Biennium (2009 to 2011)

Staff is preparing our budget requests for the next biennium, which are due to the Office of Financial Management and the Governor in early September. Here is a generalized list of the budget proposals that we are preparing, including those approved by the Board at its June 2008 meeting:

- Funding to implement portions of the Biodiversity Conservation Plan (operating budget).
- Funding to implement the top three priorities of the new Invasive Species strategic plan (operating budget).
- Funding to implement the Boating Activities Program (operating budget).



- Funding for WWRP and Youth Athletic Facility grants (capital budget).
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board requests to more fully support the role lead entities play in salmon recovery (operating budget) and to increase the state share of funding for salmon recovery projects, including support for continuing to address salmon recovery projects as part of the Puget Sound Partnership's action agenda (capital budget).

### **Board Feedback**

As part of our effort to ensure that we are providing effective support to the Board, I have asked staff to conduct an evaluation after every meeting. We will ask you to assess the logistics, agenda, quality and timeliness of notebook materials, and progress toward the Board's strategic plan. We will email the evaluation to you via SurveyMonkey.com within one week of each board meeting. This is all part of our effort to improve our support of the various boards.

### **Sustainability of Board Meetings**

RCO staff has proposed several options for reducing costs and improving the sustainability of Board meetings. The topic of greatest interest is the notebooks we deliver to you in advance of every meeting. These notebooks, while re-usable, are not the most sustainable product for an agency focused on protecting our natural resources. These plastic binders are costly to purchase and heavy to mail. The options we would like to explore vary in complexity and range from having you bring old binders to meetings so that we can reuse them, to providing materials to you electronically rather than on paper. Providing laptop computers at board meetings is also within the realm of possibilities, for those who are willing to receive materials electronically. This latter approach is similar to how many legislative committees are now operating.

The first post-meeting evaluation survey we send to you will include questions about options you would like staff to consider. We are also willing to have different approaches for individual board members. We want to see what is possible, without impairing the quality of the information we provide or the decisions made by the board.

### **Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group**

In 2007, the legislature created the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group to improve inter-agency coordination and public transparency around state land acquisitions and disposals. This entity is one of the many committees and groups supported by the RCO. Recently, this Coordinating Group formed an action plan and six work groups to implement the thirteen actions required by state law. These actions include hosting an annual forum to coordinate state land acquisition and disposals, developing common record keeping and data management approaches, and evaluating whether changes to the WWRP's planning requirements could further inter-agency coordination around state land acquisition. The work groups are busy organizing and

developing work plans and deadlines. The Coordinating Group will approve the work plans in October and report to the Office of Financial Management in early November.

### **Update on Boating Facilitation**

At the January 2008 board meeting, the RCFB approved spending \$10,000 to hire a facilitator to work to improve the coordination of state agencies that deliver boating programs. Facilitator Elizabeth McManus with Ross & Associates has completed a series of interviews with key people from agencies and interest groups. Staff from the four agencies involved (RCO, WDFW, State Parks, and DNR) met to discuss potential actions to recommend to agency executives. We anticipate forming an "Agency Boating Committee" to address actions of value to both the agencies and the boating public. Among some of the ideas being evaluated is the creation of a GIS map showing water access sites and boating facilities, so that travel distances to boating access sites statewide can be analyzed from a level of service perspective.

### **Update on SCORP approval by the National Park Service**

The Governor approved the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and sent it to the National Park Service (NPS) for acceptance. The National Park Service accepted Washington's new SCORP, re-establishing our state's eligibility for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) support. The NPS recognized the importance of the level of service concepts proposed in the document, and has awarded RCO a grant for testing the concepts over the next few years.

### **Trails Conference**

Joined by a host of contributors, RCO is again playing a key role in organizing Washington's annual trails conference, scheduled for October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in Spokane. This tenth annual gathering will feature numerous field trips showing trails in the Spokane area. As always, the full range of motor and non-motor trail enthusiasts is expected to attend.

The conference will offer informative sessions and presentations by private and non-profit organizations and government leaders at the local, state, and federal level. If you are interested in this conference, information is in the pocket of your notebook or can be found on the web (<http://www.washingtonstatetrailscoalition.org/>).

### **Staff Changes**

Since June, we filled five of the remaining vacant positions:

- ◆ two grant managers in the Recreation Section;
- ◆ one administrative assistant in the Recreation Section;
- ◆ one grant manager in the Salmon Section; and
- ◆ one section manager for the Conservation and Grant Services section.

We are fortunate that we were able to fill nearly all of our vacant or new positions over the past several months. Given the Governor's recent hiring freeze, no additional staff will be added to the agency's roster for at least the foreseeable future.

### **Big Check Celebrations**

In an effort to increase the visibility of the Board and the projects it funds, board members and I have visited the top scoring projects in every category to award grant recipients an oversized, novelty check. This is part of the board's strategic objective to broaden public support and the applicant pool for the Board's grant programs. To date, we have awarded big checks to the cities of Toledo and Woodinville, the Washington Trails Association, and Clallam County.

### **Meetings with Partners**

Puget Sound Partnership: This biennium, RCO received \$40.75 million for Puget Sound acquisition and restoration projects to be approved by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB). We are talking with the Puget Sound Partnership about how much to expect for the 2009-11 biennium and whether funds should come through the RCO or the Puget Sound Partnership budget. If such funds are appropriated, it is most likely that RCO and the SRFB would continue to administer the grants.

Puget Sound State Agency Caucus: The numerous state agencies with programs that affect the health of Puget Sound meet monthly to discuss policy and budget issues. At the past meeting, Puget Sound Partnership staff briefed the caucus on progress towards developing the Puget Sound Action Agenda and related performance measures. Several of the grants at RCO are in the mix of programs being evaluated by the Puget Sound Partnership for their ability to help implement the soon-to-be finalized Action Agenda. Examples of programs within the RCO with a direct link to Puget Sound are the WWRP habitat-related grants, Salmon Recovery grants, ALEA grants, and the state's Monitoring efforts.

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition: The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, an advocacy group for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, is considering several legislative changes to the WWRP grant program. None of these concepts is finalized yet, and may change as a result of on-going discussions. One of the concepts being considered is making nonprofit organizations eligible to apply in several categories: Riparian habitat, critical habitat, and farmland preservation. The coalition also is considering making the Washington Conservation Commission eligible for grants in the riparian and farmland categories. The coalition also may parallel our request to remove mitigation banking as eligible projects in Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The Coalition will be deciding later in the fall whether to proceed with these requests.

## **News from our Sister Boards**

Salmon Recovery Funding Board. At its July meeting, the SRFB covered a variety of important topics: RCO budget requests, programmatic grants, salmon harvest reforms, and nutrient enhancement of critical rivers and streams. A subcommittee of the SRFB is considering how the SRFB allocates money to the various regions for recovery work. The SRFB continues to work on its strategic plan.

Washington Biodiversity Council: The Biodiversity Council has been raising money to support a set of demonstration projects for the next fiscal year. The demonstration projects include developing a biodiversity scorecard, conducting an ecosystem services evaluation for the Nisqually watershed, identifying priority conservation habitat in Pierce County, supporting teacher training and student biodiversity projects, and piloting regional conservation planning in North Central Washington.

Washington Invasive Species Council: In June, the Council released its Strategic Plan: *Invaders at the Gate*. Most of the Council's focus now is on the implementation of the plan, including a series of briefings to key legislators and committee staff and development of budget proposals. There will be two fall workdays to develop implementation details for the top five recommendations of the plan.

Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health: The Forum is continuing its discussion of the stronger policy role expected by new chair Bill Wilkerson. The meeting included a coordinated presentation from the regional salmon recovery organizations, highlighting their role in coordinating local and regional monitoring in support of salmon recovery efforts. The Forum also opened up a review and discussion of agency monitoring budgets, and directed a work group of Forum members to develop criteria for prioritizing monitoring proposals in various agency budgets.

## **Volunteer Reviews for WWRP Projects:**

### Habitat and Riparian Project Reviewers:

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| Michael Ahr, WA Department of Natural Resources      | Joe LaTourette, Conservation Strategies               |
| Kai Bretherton, Citizen, Bellingham                  | Bill Dygert, Columbia Land Trust                      |
| Rachel Maggi, Natural Resources Conservation Service | Frana Milan, King County DNR and Parks                |
| Tara Galuska, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, staff   | Mike Ramsey, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, staff     |
| David Giblin, University of Washington               | Bill Robinson, The Nature Conservancy                 |
| Steve Jenks, Citizen, Olympia                        | Elizabeth Rodrick, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife |
| Joe Kane, Capitol Land Trust                         | Erick Steffens, The Nature Conservancy                |
| Lisa Lantz, State Parks and Recreation               | Pat Stevenson, Stillaguamish Indian Tribe             |

### Outdoor Recreation Project Reviewers

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| Terri Arnold, South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District   | Jennifer Bacon, City of Buckley                |
| Dave Bryant, Richland Parks and Recreation                  | Leslie Bryson, Bellingham Parks and Recreation |
| Brad Case, Ellensburg Parks and Recreation                  | Jeff Chapman, Citizen, Port Angeles            |
| Cindy Cole, Kennewick Parks and Recreation                  | Rocklynn Culp, City of Winthrop                |
| Dick Deal, Shoreline Parks and Recreation                   | Chuck Denney, Tumwater Parks and Recreation    |
| Dave Erickson, Wenatchee Parks and Recreation               | Bruce Fletcher, Tukwila Parks and Recreation   |
| Scott Gallacher, Key Peninsula Park and Recreation District | Karl Harris, Aberdeen Parks and Recreation     |
| Roland Gonzales, Moses Lake Parks and Recreation            | David Hanna, Olympia Parks and Recreation      |
| Bryan Higgins, Federal Way Parks and Recreation             | Sarah Harris, Puyallup Parks and Recreation    |
| Bill Mandeville, Community, Trade, Economic Development     | Cal Jordan, Cal Jordan Associates              |
| John Keates, Mason County Parks and Recreation              | Glenn Kost, Bellevue Parks and Recreation      |
| TJ Kieran, Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments         | Colie Hough Beck, Hough Beck Baird             |
| Rodney Lamb, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation            | Cheryl Maynard, Port of Olympia                |
| Terry Larson, Pierce County Parks and Recreation            | Tom Mark, Puyallup Parks and Recreation        |
| Mike McFarland, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation         | Sara Millbauer, Lakewood Parks and Recreation  |
| Denise Nichols, Yakima Parks and Recreation                 | Linda Oestrich, Olympia Parks and Recreation   |
| Larry Otos, Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation               | Peg Panisko, Citizen, West Richland            |
| Pat Parkhurst, Bothell Parks and Recreation                 | Sue Ranger, US Forest Service                  |
| Scott River, Olympia Parks and Recreation                   | Gayle Rothrock, Citizen, Vancouver             |
| Andy Sennes, Chehalis Parks and Recreation                  | Jim Sheler, Lacey Parks and Recreation         |
| Todd Smith, University Place Parks and Recreation           | Rick Still, Tukwila Parks and Recreation       |
| Frank Stowell, Citizen, Bainbridge Island                   | Paul Surek, Tukwila Parks and Recreation       |
| Patrice Thorell, Des Moines Parks and Recreation            | Ray Towry, Ephrata Parks and Recreation        |
| Dave Veley, Yakima Public Works                             | Bob Vogel, Pierce County Public Works          |
| Dick Weber, Puyallup Parks and Recreation                   | Fred Wert, Citizen, Winthrop                   |
| Robert Wuotila, Auburn Parks and Recreation                 |  |